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Disarmament Commission

237th meeting

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New York

Chairman: Mr. Zarif ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Pohan (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Pal (India): We are pleased that Mr. Javad Zarif has been elected to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 substantive session, and we would like to join other speakers in congratulating him on his election. We would like also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. Let me take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation for the untiring efforts and the positive contribution of the Chairman of the Commission at its 1999 session, Ambassador Maged A. Abdelaziz of Egypt.

The Disarmament Commission has a special responsibility for promoting and enhancing the international disarmament agenda by providing the deliberative leg of the triad of disarmament machinery, along with the First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament. The Disarmament Commission plays an important and unique role by allowing for in-depth discussion of items on its agenda with a view to formulating consensus recommendations keeping in mind the overall objectives of the disarmament agenda. For guiding our work during this session, we have before us General Assembly resolution 54/56 A. That consensus resolution calls on the Commission to continue its work in accordance with its mandate as set forth in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, which was the first special session devoted to disarmament.

We have two new topics on our agenda this year as the Disarmament Commission begins its three-year cycle of in-depth substantive deliberations. The topics — "Ways, and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms" — may be new, but the issues themselves are fairly well known, having engaged our attention for many decades.

On nuclear disarmament, India has traditionally attached and continues to attach the highest priority to this. My country has been in the forefront of initiatives and proposals concerning nuclear disarmament. India was the first to call for a ban on nuclear testing, in 1954. In 1963, we were among those who advocated an international non-proliferation agreement under which nuclear-weapon States would agree to give up their arsenals provided other countries refrained from developing or acquiring such weapons. In 1978, India proposed negotiations on an international convention to prohibit the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In 1988, India put forward an action plan for the phased elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. In August 1996, India joined an initiative by 28 countries in the Conference on Disarmament proposing a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons. India has been sponsoring, along with other countries, draft General Assembly resolutions for a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons in order to delegitimize the role

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of nuclear weapons. To build support for this process of delegitimization while reducing the dangers associated with the hair-trigger alert of nuclear weapons, we have also joined in sponsoring, since 1998, new draft resolutions on reducing nuclear danger.

India's commitment to global nuclear disarmament remains undiminished. We remain convinced of the importance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 1996, that

> "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". (*A/51/218, annex, para. 105 (f)*)

India today is the only nuclear-weapon State calling for a nuclear weapons convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, threat of use or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their elimination, on the lines of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

We will continue to support initiatives, individually or collectively with the non-aligned, for nuclear disarmament. India fully supports the position on nuclear disarmament adopted by the Durban Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, reiterated recently by the non-aligned Foreign Ministers meeting in Cartagena, calling for establishing in the Conference on Disarmament in 2000 an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons with a specified framework of time, including a nuclear weapons convention. This principled position is echoed in the proposals contained in documents CD/1570 and CD/1571 put forward last year by the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and reiterated in the Conference on Disarmament statement of 27 January this year by Malaysia, speaking as coordinator of the Group of 21. It is a matter of disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, has been unable to start negotiations on nuclear disarmament, to which the international community has attached the highest priority.

India has been a strong proponent of global nuclear disarmament and has taken numerous initiatives towards that objective. We remain committed to nuclear non-proliferation. India holds that genuine and lasting non-proliferation can be achieved only through agreements that are based upon equality and non-discrimination, for only these can contribute to global peace and stability. India has been a responsible member of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and will continue to take initiatives and to work with like-minded countries to bring about stable, genuine and lasting non-proliferation, thus leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The failure of the international community to effectively address the threat posed by nuclear weapons for more than 50 years enjoins us to redouble our efforts for their complete elimination in the coming years. Ours is, however, not an all-or-nothing approach. In order to prepare the ground for negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, India is willing to participate in agreed, multilateral, non-discriminatory and irreversible steps or measures.

These include a global non-first-use agreement which would include an agreement on non-use against non-nuclear weapon States that would meet the requirement for comprehensive, legally binding and irreversible negative security assurances as well as assurances to members of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We were pleased that the Disarmament Commission was able to reach agreement last year on consensus guidelines concerning nuclear-weapon-free zones. India respects the sovereign choice exercised by non-nuclear-weapon States in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, as well as the status of such zones. We are ready to convert this commitment into a legal obligation.

Secondly, negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a convention on the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a decisive step to delegitimize nuclear weapons are an essential element in the step-by-step process leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons. India has been among the sponsors of General Assembly resolutions entitled

"Convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons".

With the end of the cold war a decade ago, there remains no justification for maintaining thousands of nuclear weapons in a state of hair-trigger alert involving unacceptable risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons. There is a clear need for commitments from all nuclear-weapon States to reduce the risk of unauthorized as well as of accidental or unintentional use of nuclear weapons. Consistent with policies of non-first-use and the defensive role of nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon States need to take concrete steps to lower their alert status through gradual de-alerting actions.

The initial promise of deep, progressive and irreversible reductions in strategic nuclear arsenals of the early post-cold-war years appears to be fading. Countries with the largest nuclear arsenals clearly have the main responsibility for moving forward the process of nuclear arms reductions. Thus, there is a need for early revitalization of the bilateral process, which should also be complemented by reductions in a multilateral framework. Nuclear-weapon States should commit themselves not to deploy their nuclear weapons outside their own national territories. Nuclear weapon-sharing arrangements need to be abjured not only because they violate existing covenants but also because they contribute to enhancing the role of nuclear weapons. Tactical nuclear weapons that could be employed for war fighting roles also need to be eliminated. We urge the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, with an appropriate mandate to undertake substantive negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Even though we are aware that a fissile material cut-off treaty, as and when it is concluded, will be but a partial measure towards our shared objective of global nuclear disarmament, we support the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. India joined the consensus in the General Assembly in 1998 on resolution 53/77 I, reaffirming the substance of resolution 48/75 L of 1993, of which India had been a sponsor.

India has consistently opposed the weaponization of outer space and maintains that arms control treaties need to be implemented fully and in good faith to maintain stability. Unilateral actions perceived to be inconsistent with existing treaties may reduce the prospects for further nuclear disarmament, weaken non-proliferation constraints and encourage other nuclear-weapon States to reconsider their strategic force modernization plans. The appropriate answer to the concerns that have been put forth as justification for these actions is, we believe, a combination of de-alerting measures that would reduce risks associated with accidental or unauthorized launches and an accelerated nuclear disarmament process that would reduce and eventually eliminate those risks.

Keeping in mind the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, we look forward to substantive discussions regarding ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Our discussions on issues relating to conventional arms will, no doubt, benefit from existing work in this area, particularly the 1999 Disarmament Commission guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N; the 1996 Disarmament Commission guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991; the 1993 guidelines and recommendations for the regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security; and the guidelines for the study on conventional disarmament, adopted in 1982. In the light of previously agreed guidelines adopted by the Disarmament Commission by consensus, we need to avoid less productive approaches and concepts that detract from previous work. It is important to focus on issues relevant to disarmament and to avoid duplication of work undertaken elsewhere. It is therefore important first to clarify the scope of our discussions.

India supports greater transparency in the global arms trade as an important confidence-building measure. We have regularly provided information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since its inception. We believe that the further consolidation and universalization of the Register is necessary to realize its full potential. It is in this context that we supported a General Assembly resolution requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 2000. The report of the group of governmental experts will no doubt constitute a useful

resource in guiding our deliberations in the Disarmament Commission.

The question of arms transfers can basically be divided into two categories: licit State-to-State transfers to meet legitimate defence requirements and security concerns based on threat perceptions, and illicit arms transfers often involving a pernicious nexus with cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. Illicit trade in small arms and light weapons involving diversion to non-State entities has implications not only for the security of States but also for their economic and social development. The international community has recognized this as one of the priority problems, and an international conference in 2001 will address the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. India supports and will continue actively to participate in the preparatory process for that conference. A successful international conference that comes out with effective measures for combating illicit transfers and circulation will itself constitute an important confidence-building measure for international peace and security.

Landmines constitute another important element of our discussions on conventional weapons. India's approach and position on the issue of landmines is clear and consistent. We remain committed to the objective of a non-discriminatory, universal and global ban on anti-personnel mines through a phased process that addresses the legitimate defence requirements of States, while at the same time ameliorating the humanitarian crises that have resulted from the irresponsible transfer and indiscriminate use of landmines. We believe that a phased approach commends itself as a confidence-building process enabling States, particularly those with long borders, such as India, to move ahead while remaining sensitive to safeguarding their legitimate security requirements. Such a phased approach constitutes a confidence-building measure as it narrows the scope in which landmines can be used only for the defence of borders. India also supports negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a ban on transfers of anti-personnel landmines on the basis of a mandate that reflects the interests of all delegations.

Meanwhile, the process of the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines will be facilitated by addressing the legitimate defensive role of anti-personnel landmines for operational requirements under the defence doctrines of the countries concerned, through the availability of appropriate militarily effective, non-lethal and cost-effective alternative technologies. In this context, India attaches importance to the full and unhampered transfer of technology related to mine detection and clearance, as well as to international assistance. India has been an active participant in the process relating to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and has signed and ratified all its protocols, including the latest amended Protocol II concerning landmines and Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. The universalization of the Convention process through the early signature and ratification of all its protocols would, in our opinion, constitute a major confidence-building measure in the conventional arms field. In addition, we would urge all States parties to fulfil the commitments undertaken in the Convention framework. The review conference to be held in 2001 will no doubt provide a good opportunity for stock-taking under the Convention's various protocols.

My delegation looks forward to engaging actively in substantive and meaningful deliberations during this session and would like to assure the Chairman of our fullest cooperation.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to congratulate the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Javad Zarif, on his election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. The delegation of Mexico pledges its full support to the Chairman with a view to ensuring the success of the work of the Commission. Our congratulations go also to the other Commission officers.

We convey our thanks to the delegation of Egypt for the splendid work that Mr. Maged A. Abelaziz carried out as Chairman of the Commission at its 1999 session.

For the first time, the Disarmament Commission is putting into practice the agreements set out in General Assembly decision 52/492 of 8 September 1998 on rationalization of the Commission's work. We are pleased that the lengthy consultation process on the two substantive items on our agenda attained its principal goals: balance in the consideration of the Commission's disarmament agenda, and reaffirmation of the important role of the Commission as a

deliberative body within the existing disarmament machinery.

It is our hope that our debate over the coming fortnight will lay the groundwork for the consideration of both of our substantive agenda items over the next two years with a view to the adoption of recommendations or guidelines for consideration by the General Assembly. My delegation will do its utmost to attain that goal.

On the item entitled "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament", we believe that the Disarmament Commission should take into account recent events in that sphere. I refer in particular to the consensus decisions of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The programme of action on nuclear disarmament adopted at that Conference includes measures underscoring the unequivocal commitment of nuclear-weapon States to bring about the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals. We are convinced that that commitment, along with other measures set out in the programme of action, can provide a basis for our deliberations.

We recognize that the Disarmament Commission is not a forum in which binding international nuclear-disarmament instruments can be negotiated. But it is a forum in which we can openly and constructively address various aspects of the subject. We are convinced that by the end of the third year of the Commission's consideration of "Ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament" we will have given strong new impetus to the work of other disarmament organs.

On the item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", we believe that the accumulated experience at the bilateral, subregional and regional levels should be the point of reference for the discussions that are about to begin. For the Americas, the most recent example of the determination of the countries of the region to make progress with respect to confidence-building measures was the 1999 adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, the provisions of which largely echo the structure of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

In our view, when the Disarmament Commission considers that item it should focus on new measures to promote confidence-building among Member States, avoiding duplication of the negotiations in the Commission that some years ago led to the adoption of guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures and for the implementation of such measures on a global or regional level.

The current situation in the Conference on Disarmament, where negotiations have not yielded agreement on that body's programme of work, makes us particularly sensitive to the need to renew efforts to overcome obstacles in the political dialogue on disarmament issues. With that hope in mind, the delegation of Mexico considers that the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference to identify ways and means of eliminating the nuclear threat would provide a special opportunity to consider actions necessary to make progress in the nuclear disarmament process. My delegation hopes that that initiative will be considered at the present session.

Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin, as other speakers in this general exchange of views have, by conveying congratulations to Mr. Javad Zarif on his election to chair the Disarmament Commission at its 2000 substantive session. We are convinced that, given his experience and the zeal with which he has tackled his work, we will by the end of this session have attained our objectives. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

Fifty-five years have gone by since the beginning of the nuclear era, which brought about a race to manufacture weapons of mass destruction, something that endangers international security and the very existence of humanity. Throughout those 55 years we have witnessed efforts to rein in the competition unleashed in connection with nuclear weapons. Yet despite the advances that have been made, we are beginning a new century without having attained our principal objective: not merely to slow the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also to reach the point of true disarmament.

A few weeks ago, at the close of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, consensus was reached on a final document that, although reflecting agreement, was not a significant advance in that sphere. We can, however, point to what appears to be one positive development: the reaffirmation by nuclear-

weapon States of their unequivocal determination ultimately to eliminate them. During the Review Conference we could discern some progress in respect of safeguards and of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. But, unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East and in South Asia.

Guatemala cannot but feel satisfaction at the fact that our Latin American and Caribbean region has played a pioneering role in the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We fully appreciate the importance of these undertakings and place high value on the benefits derived from them. That is why we resolutely support all current efforts to create such zones in other parts of the world. We consider that they can and should serve as a regional platform for promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the disarmament process. Our efforts should be directed at ensuring that the use of nuclear energy contributes to the development of humankind, not to its destruction.

Until now, we have lived in a world where the existence of nuclear weapons has been justified largely as a preventive measure guaranteeing the maintenance of international peace. And we have seen a conventional arms race carried out in the name of the defence and the security of our peoples, involving weapons with unprecedented destructive capacity that are becoming an ever increasing potential danger affecting all of us equally. This is why, in our opinion, it is imperative that we bring this situation to an end. We therefore support such initiatives as the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which we consider to be a concrete measure in that regard.

Moreover, we are pleased to have been among the sponsors of most of the General Assembly's resolutions on conventional weapons. Among these, we wish to single out resolution 54/43, on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures, and resolution 54/54 H, on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

Regarding the latter resolution, Guatemala has from the outset been participating very actively in the group of interested States led by Germany, in which some 70 United Nations Member States participate. Activities such as that being carried out in Albania by the Department for Disarmament Affairs provide an example of cooperation among members of that group and of the results of their work.

Having endured the tragic effects of an armed conflict for so many years, and continuing to have to cope with ordinary criminal violence in which small arms and light weapons play an important role, Guatemala urges all States members of the Commission to join efforts to halt the advance of and reduce to the minimum the arms race in all its aspects. This must be everyone's struggle, not the struggle of a few. In this regard, the United Nations and its institutions as a whole, as well as its Member States, should remain united.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to extend to the Chairman and all the other members of the Bureau my sincere congratulations on your election.

The work of the Disarmament Commission marks the beginning of a new three-year journey to establish a framework for guidelines and ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and practical confidence-building measures in the area of conventional weapons — these being the two issues agreed for consideration at this session.

I wish to deal with nuclear disarmament as a first priority in disarmament activities, as determined by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in its Final Document. We had hoped that the topic adopted for consideration on nuclear disarmament would be more specific, containing a specific reference to a commitment to serious work in order to free the world of nuclear weapons. We had hoped that the nuclear disarmament issue would be dealt with in the spirit that prevailed throughout the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which led to adoption of a Final Document including a full commitment of nuclear-weapon States to bring about nuclear disarmament.

Moving to a world free of nuclear weapons should begin with serious regional efforts aimed collectively at achieving nuclear disarmament and freeing the world of its perils. In our region, the Middle East, all the countries of the region but one — Israel — have been committed to achieving this noble objective. All other Middle Eastern countries have acceded to the NPT. The accession of all States would be a clear declaration of their rejection of the nuclear option and

an affirmation of their commitment to free our region of nuclear weapons. Our countries have worked hard to move these efforts from the regional level to the international level in order to bring about a nuclear-weapon-free world. Israel alone is delaying regional efforts by firmly holding on to the nuclear option and by rejecting accession to the NPT and the subjection of its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) full-scope safeguards. In that regard, the sixth NPT Review Conference called for adoption of the following in its final document.

(spoke in English)

> "The Conference recalls that operative paragraph 4 of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East 'calls upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards'. The Conference notes, in this connection, that the report of the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.2000/7) states that several States have acceded to the Treaty and that, with these accessions, all States of the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Conference welcomes the accession of these States and reaffirms the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East." *(NPT/CONF.2000/28, Part I, p. 24, para. 16 (3))*

(spoke in Arabic)

Egypt attaches great importance to implementing the objectives and guidelines of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament in the Middle East region and throughout the world. We believe that confronting the danger of nuclear-weapons proliferation in the Middle East is an urgent necessity. We should not drag our feet on this. Therefore, there have been many Egyptian initiatives to free the Middle East of nuclear threats and perils and the danger of maintaining in the region nuclear facilities that are not subject to full-scope IAEA safeguards. Since 1974 Egypt has submitted to the First Committee of the General Assembly a draft resolution establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The resolution was adopted by consensus in 1980.

The General Assembly adopts annually, with an overwhelming majority, a resolution on the dangers of nuclear-weapon proliferation in the Middle East, and it calls upon Israel, as the only State in the Middle East that has not acceded to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty without delay and to declare its rejection of the nuclear option. Parallel to these efforts, President Mubarak of Egypt made a statement in April 1990 on his initiative calling for the Middle East to be freed of all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery to preclude that danger, and as a natural extension of Egypt's invitation to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In June 1998 he made a general proposal to hold an international conference to achieve a world free of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

To bring about nuclear disarmament and to establish the major relevant guidelines, the Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs participated with the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden in issuing a declaration, in June 1998, entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", which calls upon the international community, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to accelerate steps to bring about nuclear disarmament.

The new agenda coalition States submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly during the last two years concerning the necessity for nuclear-weapon States to declare their full and unconditional commitment to eliminate all nuclear weapons, calling upon them to take practical steps to achieve this as well as achieving universality of accession to the NPT. In this context, and within the framework of nuclear disarmament, I wish to state Egypt's support for the Secretary-General's proposal in his Millennium Summit report that a major international conference be held to consider means of eliminating nuclear weapons. We hope that such a conference will be held as soon as possible.

Confidence-building measures with regard to conventional weapons are an important disarmament issue, to which Egypt attaches great importance. Although the Disarmament Commission has considered it, we believe that many developments and inputs could

be reconsidered, in the hope of reaching agreement on guidelines on this matter. One of the issues that should be reconsidered within this framework is the degree of success of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a confidence-building measure over past years. Egypt's assessment of the outcome of the meetings of governmental experts shows a failure to broaden the Register's scope to include military acquisitions from local production and manufacturing, as well as failure to include additional categories of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, it has failed in its present format as an effective means of establishing confidence.

We believe that transparency in the area of weapons of mass destruction is as important as transparency in the area of conventional weapons. Security is indivisible and cannot be segmented. In this context, we hope that the governmental experts, who are currently holding meetings on this issue, will reach agreement on broadening the scope of the Register in the manner that I indicated earlier. Otherwise, its importance as a confidence-building measure will be lessened, since the categories that the Register includes today cannot form the basis for achieving confidence-building measures.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): May I also congratulate Mr. Zarif, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on his assumption of the chair of the 2000 Disarmament Commission. I also congratulate the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, as well as the other members of the Bureau. They are all assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

If we are honest with ourselves, we must concede that the inability of the multilateral forums and the international community to substantively address some of the most central issues of our day reflects a deepening crisis in international relations, non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control. The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to start its work and the fact that most First Committee resolutions do not enjoy the support of all Member States and that the work of this Commission is often ignored are reasons for concern.

Part of the problem is that these disarmament mechanisms were created many years ago and do not reflect today's realities in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. This Commission was created at the height of the cold war in 1978, at a time when the Conference on Disarmament was comprised of only a few members. At that time disarmament negotiations were the prerogative of only a few States; hence the Disarmament Commission was created as a body to consider and make recommendations on various problems in the field of disarmament. The situation is slightly different today. Although still not open to participation by all Member States, the Conference on Disarmament now has 66 members and represents a broader political spectrum.

The 2000 Disarmament Commission will be the first to focus its consideration on only two disarmament issues. The South African delegation is hopeful that our deliberations over the next three years will identify ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament and to find achievable means to build confidence among States in the field of conventional weapons. All efforts should, however, be made to retain the Commission's relevancy through focused debates on these two agenda items. The fact that the Commission, after four years of deliberations, could not agree to convene a fourth special session on disarmament, not only weakened the value of the Commission as a disarmament forum, but clearly identified the need to review the working methods of this body. Careful consideration should be given to a mechanism that would reflect our deliberations at the end of three years without wasting valuable time and resources on unnecessary complicated negotiations.

Nuclear disarmament is considered by all States to be one of the most important among the disarmament issues facing the international community. Moreover, nuclear disarmament is a concern of the entire international community. A source of concern for South Africa, however, is the continuing refusal to recognize that this is indeed the case. The long and frustrating negotiations to formulate an agenda item for this Commission's consideration on an issue that is of global concern is indicative of the lack of commitment to achieve progress in the field of nuclear disarmament.

South Africa is pleased with the outcome of the recent 2000 Review Conference of the States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, at which the nuclear-weapon States made an unequivocal commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons — an important political step, indeed. We welcome the undertakings by the nuclear-weapon

States to further reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally to increase transparency with regard to their nuclear-weapon capabilities, to further reduce non-strategic weapons and to diminish the role for nuclear weapons in security policies, as well as their undertaking that all five nuclear-weapon States will be engaged in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

These undertakings, as well as the agreement on the establishment of an appropriate subsidiary body in the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament and the agreement that a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices will be negotiated within five years, would provide much needed momentum for progress in the field of nuclear disarmament. However, much remains to be done to ensure a nuclear-weapon-free world. Concrete agreed measures to reduce the operational status of nuclear-weapon systems, such as de-alerting and removal of nuclear warheads from their delivery systems, are urgently required.

Our deliberations on ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament should build upon, but in no way diminish, the undertakings given and agreements reached at the recent NPT Review Conference on a substantive agenda for nuclear disarmament. South Africa will not lend its support to any outcome of these deliberations that will undermine the success achieved at that Conference. Our deliberations should be in support of the process in the Conference on Disarmament, and we should consider other tangible ways and means to positively address the core elements required to facilitate action and results in moving our disarmament agenda forward.

Although nuclear weapons constitute the greatest threat to the survival of mankind, the build-up of conventional weapons beyond a level which can be considered legitimate for the purposes of self-defence creates an unstable environment, in particular in areas where regional instability leads to regional conflicts. Conventional weapons, particularly small arms and light weapons, are the source of most of the death and suffering caused in conflicts around the world today. The rebuilding and prosperity of society which is gained from various peace and democratization initiatives is curtailed by the accompanying proliferation of these weapons.

The excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons negatively impacts on confidence among States, especially among neighbouring States. The underpinning factor to practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons would be transparency. Transparency is a useful technique for building mutual confidence whereby non-hostile intentions can be communicated, "worst case" estimates can be deflated and verification can be promoted, and it can provide for the timely detection of destabilizing accumulations of weapons.

Our deliberations on this topic should, however, supplement and draw upon work already done by the Disarmament Commission at previous sessions, the Conference on Disarmament and United Nations study groups, as well as upon the experiences of individual States in this regard. We should also bear in mind the preparations for and the convening of the 2001 international conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. My delegation believes that the 2001 conference should consider concrete measures to enhance transparency in the trade in small arms and light weapons, with a view to building confidence among States.

I recall that the South African delegation at the 1998 session of the Commission circulated a working paper on my Government's policy on transparency in armaments. In addition to the annual submission of data on the transfer of weapons falling within the seven categories of the conventional arms Register, my delegation believes that a similar reporting system on other categories of weapons, such as small arms, light weapons, explosives and non-lethal military equipment, either as part of the current Register or in the form of a separate new register, would further enhance confidence among States. The scope of the current Register is too narrow; it does not include types of weapons, such as small arms and light weapons, that are mainly utilized to destabilize countries in many regions of the world. South African and other African experts participating in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the improved operation of the Register have consistently argued that the lack of participation by smaller countries in the Register, particularly from Africa, is mainly due to the narrow scope of the current Register.

Another practical and tangible measure to promote confidence among States in the field of

conventional arms is the destruction of surplus, confiscated or collected weapons, no longer in use by Government forces. In this regard, I recall the Secretary-General's report on small arms (A/52/298), in which he recommended, among other things, that States should exercise restraint in the transfer of surplus small arms manufactured solely for possession and use by the military and police forces. The report also recommended that all States should consider the possibility of destroying all surplus small arms. To this end, the South African Police Services have already destroyed several tons of surplus arms, in 1997. My Government furthermore decided to destroy all other surplus arms rather than sell them. Studies on the legal and technical implications of this destruction process are in the process of completion, and these weapons will soon be destroyed in a transparent manner. We are encouraged that a number of other States have implemented similar policies and similar actions.

The South African Government's policies on destruction of surplus weapons, as well as the cooperative agreements with some of our neighbouring States to destroy collected or confiscated weapons, formed the basis of the call in General Assembly resolution 54/54 R, "Illicit traffic in small arms", in which States were encouraged to take appropriate national measures to destroy surplus confiscated or collected small arms and light weapons, and to provide, on a voluntary basis, information to the Secretary-General on types and quantities destroyed. The destruction of surplus, confiscated or collected weapons, together with an appropriate reporting system on this process would most certainly promote confidence among States in support of regional stability. It would also provide the means to limit the illicit traffic in these weapons. My delegation will, in the course of the Commission's deliberations on this topic, submit concrete proposals on ways to build confidence among States through the destruction of surplus confiscated or collected weapons.

South Africa remains committed to working in this Commission and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums to achieve the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and to limit the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence.

Mr. Benítez-Sáenz (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to extend to the Chairman my best wishes in chairing the work of the Disarmament Commission. We also wish to extend our gratitude to his predecessor, and in particular to Minister Angélica Arce of Mexico, who has played a very important role in the work of this Commission.

It is a particular source of pride that Argentina is chairing the Working Group on confidence-building measures, and we wish it great success, as we do Ghana, which is chairing the Working Group on nuclear disarmament.

The Disarmament Commission is meeting at a significant time. Over a month ago we saw the conclusion of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and we achieved a Final Document at the Conference, which has never happened before. For Uruguay, the leading role played by countries that make up the coalition for a new agenda as a driving force of the Conference was particularly important. We vigorously supported its proposal, because we feel it will pave the way for disarmament in the coming years.

In the middle of May the non-nuclear-weapon States saw an unequivocal commitment by those States that still maintain nuclear arsenals to achieve significant process in order to limit and eliminate such arsenals. It is not right that these arsenals still exist, without our having a clear idea how long they will continue to be on the face of the earth.

In the midst of this whole debate, the Disarmament Commission, the only universal forum dealing with this important topic, has the responsibility of appealing to the Conference on Disarmament to unblock the initiative to draft a Convention banning the use of nuclear weapons. The call for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) continues to grow. My country, aware of its responsibility in this area, ratified the Treaty on 20 June, as a way of contributing to this important process. We are also very pleased that included in the Secretary-General's initiative to identify the 25 most important treaties for the next millennium are a large number of treaties related to disarmament.

At the same time, we eagerly await the upcoming Millennium Summit, with the understanding that it will result in a renewed commitment to eliminating weapons of mass destruction. We fervently support the Secretary-General's call for an international conference to deal with this matter.

This year the Commission will begin a new cycle of work in order to tackle its disarmament responsibilities. We hope that the new themes for discussion will allow us to make a significant contribution to achieving the progress that we all want. Uruguay feels that these approaches should result in this forum providing the international community with significant guidelines for reformulating the concept of arms limitation and promoting real progress in this area.

In October 1995, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, experts of the Rio Group and the European Union met for the first time to discuss confidence-building mechanisms. As of yesterday Argentina is chairing the Working Group of this Commission to establish methods for enhancing transparency at all levels. We trust in the work of our Argentine brothers, and are convinced that the achievements of MERCOSUR — including bilateral cooperation to make training for peacekeeping operations more efficient — along with other regional efforts, will make a constructive contribution to the cause of complete and universal disarmament.

Another important advance in this area is the German initiative — which we have followed from its inception — on the consolidation of peace through practical confidence-building measures. This initiative has already produced specific results.

The international community is also preparing a conference on small arms, which will take place next year. The hemisphere's contribution — the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illegal Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials — is one of the foundations for this work. The Convention is complemented by the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which further strengthens cooperation among our countries.

In conclusion, Uruguay attaches the utmost importance to the Disarmament Commission, and we are convinced that in coming years it will have to take a vigorous stand in order to avoid the resumption of arms races, which we had considered things of the past.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first to congratulate the Chairman on his election for the year 2000 session. We also extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau, and acknowledge the valuable work done by Ambassador Abdelaziz and by Minister Angélica Arce in their work as Chairman and Acting Vice-Chairperson, respectively, of the Disarmament Commission.

We are beginning this session of the Disarmament Commission with a paradoxical mix of optimism and expectation, uncertainty and concern. The source of the expectations is the significant results of the recent Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which we were able to achieve a consensus among the States parties and a Final Document which establishes commitments for the future on the part of the nuclear-weapon States and can be seen as a very positive and pragmatic step forward.

Nevertheless, in the nuclear field there also remain problems, such as the reaffirmation and strengthening of nuclear doctrines, the lack of concrete measures to reduce the possibility of a nuclear war, risks to the ongoing viability of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, as well as the lack of a commitment to unblock negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

We reaffirm in this context that there is no reason to believe that the indefinite possession of such weapons is justified. We are ready to continue working to achieve the total elimination of the nuclear arsenals. In this respect, we join other delegations in supporting the Secretary-General's idea, contained in his report for the Millennium Summit, of an international conference to help identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

Ways to advance the nuclear disarmament effort include the prompt signing and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by States that have yet to do so; the strengthening and consolidation of the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones; and the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Our delegation is pleased to consider confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, because these are concrete measures that would complement the initiatives to limit arms and reduce military spending. We welcome the fact that the Chairman of the Working Group concerned is the representative of Argentina, a country with which we share extensive bilateral experience in this field.

For Peru, confidence-building measures go beyond the military dimension. We believe there is a need to explore the effectiveness of non-military measures, such as political, economic, social and cultural processes involving a wide range of actors within society in an ongoing process of feedback, and in a specific regional context. Beginning with this wider view of the concept of confidence-building measures, our region has promoted the adoption of different mechanisms for cooperation and integration — without overlooking the traditional military field, for which the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions provides an essential foundation.

Peru also places great importance on bilateral relations in this area. We have established confidence-building measures with our neighbours — Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile, as well as Argentina and Venezuela — with which we carry out tasks designed to strengthen democracy and enhance the security of our citizens and cooperation in dealing with the wide range of mutual dangers, regarding which many options remain to be explored.

On the global level, we emphasize the importance of the role of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms — a concrete confidence-building measure which can still be improved. Peru has participated in the Register, submitting annual and timely information, since its inception. In addition, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction is a substantive contribution to creating an environment of security and trust.

Peru would like to reaffirm the role of the Disarmament Commission as the appropriate forum for open dialogue and debate in this area. We are prepared to cooperate fully in the work that needs to be done this year.

Mr. Suh (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I would like to join previous speakers in extending our warmest congratulations to Ambassador Zarif on his election as Chairman of the 2000 session of the Disarmament Commission. I am confident that his able leadership and vast experience will steer our deliberations to a productive outcome. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation as we work to ensure the success of our session.

The Disarmament Commission has played an important role as a deliberative body in the field of disarmament. Over the years, the Commission has elaborated guidelines for common ground on many issues. This year we have two agenda items before us: first, ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament; and secondly, practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. My delegation looks forward to our putting together a practical programme of work on these two issues after our substantive deliberations.

The adoption by consensus of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) last month was a highly significant step towards strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime in the years ahead. In particular, the agreement by the Conference on practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the NPT and the 1995 decision on "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" has boosted our expectations concerning the prospects for nuclear disarmament.

At the heart of these efforts lies the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to nuclear disarmament. While recognizing that significant progress has been made thus far, my delegation feels that nuclear-weapon States should make even greater efforts to translate their commitments into concrete action.

Meanwhile, recognizing that nuclear disarmament is a complex and delicate process closely linked to global strategic relations, my delegation believes that a practical, step-by-step approach is called for. In this respect, the START process should be revitalized through the earliest possible entry into force of START II. My delegation welcomes the recent ratification of START II by the Russian Federation, and looks forward to early implementation of the Treaty. Furthermore, we hope that the United States and Russia will commence and conclude negotiations on START III as soon as possible. This would contribute to further reductions in nuclear arsenals.

At the same time, we believe that as a confidence-building measure leading to nuclear disarmament further efforts could be made voluntarily to increase transparency with regard to nuclear-

weapons capabilities and to diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in the security policies of nuclear-weapon States.

We attach great importance to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In this regard, we call upon all States that have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty, especially those among the 44 States whose adherence is required for the Treaty's entry into force, to do so without further delay. The nuclear-weapon States should provide the leadership for facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT. All States concerned should place moratoriums on nuclear tests pending the entry into force of the CTBT.

The fissile material cut-off treaty would enhance non-proliferation and is an essential element underpinning nuclear disarmament. We believe that negotiations on this treaty should commence immediately on the basis of the 1995 Shannon mandate. All States concerned are called upon to place moratoriums on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

Our deliberations in the Commission should be on the achievements of the NPT Review Conference last month, and should complement the work of the Conference on Disarmament, thereby avoiding duplication.

Let me now turn to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. The primary goal of confidence-building measures is to reduce the risk of armed conflicts among States by diminishing mistrust, misunderstanding and miscalculation. Confidence-building measures will enhance peace and stability, and will facilitate disarmament among States. Embracing military and non-military aspects, confidence-building measures should be applied in a comprehensive manner.

The Disarmament Commission, for its part, has adopted two sets of guidelines relating to confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms: the 1996 Guidelines for arms transfers and the 1999 Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N. The former — the first code of conduct in this area — has contributed to enhancing transparency in international arms transfers and to eradicating illicit arms transfers. The latter is expected to play an important role in consolidating peace, especially in post-conflict situations. We support these guidelines and look forward to their observance.

As my delegation considers transparency in armaments to be a fundamental instrument in building confidence among States, we are of the view that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an effective tool for promoting an enhanced level of confidence among States. We therefore support efforts to consolidate and further develop the Register and hope to see wider participation among States.

Among conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons have recently received considerable attention from the international community, owing to their prevalence in modern conflicts. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which was submitted in August 1999, which contains recommendations on confidence-building in terms of both reduction and prevention measures. The 2001 United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects will provide the opportunity to devise a plan of action to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. If adopted, the plan of action will be an important milestone in our efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to build confidence among States on the global level. We look forward to the successful outcome of the conference.

Since security situations differ from region to region, confidence-building measures will obviously not be the same everywhere. However, there are two universal characteristics of confidence-building measures: transparency and openness. As for specific measures, advance notification and observation of military manoeuvres, mutual visits by military personnel, the establishment of hotlines and the exchange of military information can be key confidence-building elements.

As the Asia-Pacific region is characterized by a diversity of political systems, levels of economic development and cultural and historical backgrounds, confidence-building measures that span the entire region have been difficult to establish. However, since its inception in 1994, the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF) has provided a useful framework for region-wide security dialogue.

and has made significant progress in developing and implementing various confidence-building measures.

For its part, the Korean Government has been participating actively in this process and, in collaboration with the Malaysian Government, will host an inter-sessional meeting of the ARF on confidence-building, in Seoul in November 2000.

The Disarmament Commission has taken up some very important issues on the international disarmament agenda. Indeed, the two issues before us today carry great significance for global peace and security. I would like to reaffirm that my delegation will play a constructive role throughout our deliberations. We will give our full cooperation and support to the Commission in the hope that it can make a useful contribution to the promotion of peace and security by devising practical confidence-building measures for a new era.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to congratulate Ambassador Zarif, and through him Iran, on his well-deserved election to preside over the work of this Commission. We are convinced that his well-known skill will ensure the success of our work. In this regard, we assure him of the continued cooperation of our delegation. We would also like to extend our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

The Disarmament Commission, as a specialized multilateral decision-making mechanism, is the ideal body to promote disarmament in all of its forms. We welcome that this year one of the Commission's Working Groups is dedicated to reviewing practical ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. Undoubtedly, that discussion will serve as a follow-up to the recent successful 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In this context, my delegation supports the renewed commitment of the States parties to the NPT to adopt a range of practical measures in order to make progress on the common objective of eliminating nuclear weapons, with a view to complying with the obligation contained in article VI of the Treaty and to continuing negotiations to achieve complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Among the possible measures designed to achieve nuclear disarmament, we believe that priority should be given to the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as to beginning negotiations on an international instrument to prohibit the production of fissile material.

Furthermore, the nuclear-weapon States should truly commit themselves to disarmament negotiations. It is crucial that they deactivate their defensive systems and halt their programmes to modernize their nuclear arsenals. These States must also adopt a no-first-use policy and begin a gradual, systematic and steadfast process of dismantling their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. The nuclear-weapon States must also prohibit the transfer of technology, knowledge and material related to the development of nuclear arms.

Today, the nuclear-weapon States' obligation to adopt disarmament measures is becoming more relevant. We are living under the threat of a new arms race, fuelled by the development of nuclear weapons by some States that are not party to the NPT, as well as by the ambition of other States to develop anti-missile defence systems.

Costa Rica, as a member of the nuclear-weapon-free zone of Latin America, firmly supports the creation and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. My country is honoured to be part of the historic Treaty of Tlatelolco which established the first such zone. We understand the positive contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to global peace and security. And thus we urgently call on the international community to heed the desire of those States that wish to create new zones.

Costa Rica is known as an unarmed, civilian democracy that has made disarmament a fundamental and important pillar of its foreign policy. This is a logical extension of our domestic policy. It is for this reason that the foreign policy of our country must reflect and promote the national values that define it, for which it is necessary to establish instruments and strategies to promote Costa Rica's position in this regard within the international system. For these purposes, my country has played an innovative international role, well-suited to addressing the new challenges of the twenty-first century. This has involved promoting democratic peace and the renunciation of arms, not only in every country but also among countries and institutions of the international system. Our historic mission and our stand must be based on the fact that a greater commitment to unarmed

democracy and peace reduce the possibility of being attacked or becoming victims of conflicts.

My delegation is also pleased that during this session the Commission is to consider practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. In my country we are convinced that the first step to increase confidence is to limit arms transfers and to promote transparency regarding arsenals. The historical experience of Central America has taught us that the accumulation of arms and munitions is a true obstacle to the peace process and a direct threat to all countries adjoining conflict areas.

Arms trafficking leads to political instability, organized crime and human rights violations. We have to begin an international campaign to stop the illicit trafficking in small arms and their ammunition. We should also make additional efforts in the area of customs and border controls, police cooperation and the proper registration of every weapon. Countries that produce and sell arms must exercise effective control over their exports and adopt measures to combat the manufacture and illegal sale of weapons. We must collect, confiscate and destroy surplus small arms. We must also prevent authorized transfers of weapons from being diverted.

It is also essential to reduce arms manufacturing and seriously begin converting the arms industry. In each of our States we have to set restrictions on the production, possession and trade of small arms, in order to prevent them from being used in crime or rebellion.

With a view to enhancing confidence among States and promoting peace, we must prohibit the transfer of military material and personnel, as well as financial and logistic support, to those States whose military or paramilitary units or security forces are committing or contributing to human rights violations. This prohibition should also be extended to those States that do not respect the minimum democratic and civic guarantees.

As regards transparency, we have to prohibit the export of arms to countries that do not report their transfers to the United Nations, as well as to States that have not signed the main human rights, international humanitarian law and disarmament instruments. In this context, we support the initiative of an international code of conduct on arms transfers, to be found in document A/54/766. Reconstruction, reconciliation and normalization between and within nations that have been victims of armed conflicts should also be promoted. We know that war often leads to other wars; armed conflicts feed deep-rooted hatreds and lead to reprisals. As a result, peace requires a conscious effort to achieve reconciliation and brotherhood among all men and women.

I wish to conclude by repeating that our country has made disarmament something more than an objective of its foreign policy. My country is very interested in becoming a member of the Conference on Disarmament. For over 50 years Costa Rica has had no arms spending, and it devotes its public budget to education, preventive health and investment in the infrastructure. Our national experience has taught us that not investing in arms is the only viable alternative for those countries that are truly committed to the well-being of their peoples. We believe that the promotion of peace and security, both internationally and domestically, requires a resolute policy to reduce military spending and to strengthen the civil power. For this reason, we know that disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military spending are indispensable for the well-being of humankind and the promotion of peace.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, from the Arms Control Bureau of the Department of State.

Mr. Corden (United States of America): The United States delegation is pleased to see the Chairman, you, Sir, and other members of the Bureau in place to take up the work of the Disarmament Commission for 2000. We pledge you our support.

This year we begin consideration of two new items, one "nuclear" and one "conventional", reflecting the breadth and interrelationship of issues that are taken up by multilateral bodies devoted to strengthening international security, especially when dealing with weapons.

After more than half a century of study and deliberative efforts under the auspices of the United Nations, not to mention bilateral negotiations and multilateral negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and elsewhere, there is a very large body of information and results on which to base our agreed work, looking towards the new millennium on which we are embarking. It is also worth recalling the efforts

prior to the establishment of the United Nations, some of which, like the Geneva Protocol of 1925, have continuing force today, and some of which are salutary if we can learn from their failure. The fact that a number of the arms control agreements negotiated between the world wars did not stand the test of time should give us pause. As the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs reminded us yesterday, momentum can be lost. Dedication to achieving the next practical steps is a matter for constant renewal.

Our agenda item concerning ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament is one with perhaps the greatest amount of material readily available for the work of this Commission, it having preoccupied so many for so long since the advent of the nuclear age. This means as well that it may prove especially challenging to break new ground. Indeed, many speakers here have already pointed to the remarkable success of the sixth Review Conference of States Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), at which the United States outlined in considerable detail both the accomplishments that it has been party to, and its views on the ways and means to move ahead. There would be little point in rehearsing these accomplishments and views today, with the exception of the observation that the United States interventions at that Conference, and its concluding document, made clear the nuclear disarmament steps that the United States supports. Within the Working Group dealing with this item, we will be prepared to discuss our specific views in greater depth and to make available a detailed accounting of how much progress has been achieved with respect to the undertaking of all NPT parties in its article VI.

However, there are three issues that warrant comment at this time. First, as Secretary Albright made clear at the NPT Review Conference, in the wake of the vote of the United States Senate not to give its advice and consent to ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the United States is continuing to work for our eventual ratification of this key step in the process of nuclear disarmament. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, as Special Adviser to the President and Secretary of State, is pursuing his mission to lay the groundwork for this outcome. The United States is respecting the moratorium on nuclear explosions it initiated in 1992, and has called on States to sign and ratify the CTBT, and in the interim not to carry out nuclear explosions. The United States has continued to support the work of the CTBT's Preparatory Commission. We have welcomed the steps leading to ratification by others, in particular the Russian Federation, and, as I noted this morning, now Uruguay, and we look forward to similar positive action, especially by others of the 44 States whose deposit of instruments of ratification is required for entry into force. Similarly, we welcome the indication that China may accelerate its ratification of the CTBT.

Secondly, the head of the delegation of China, Ambassador Shen, yesterday spoke to the impasse currently existing in the Conference on Disarmament on resuming negotiations on the next multilateral step in the nuclear disarmament process, the fissile material cut-off treaty. Needless to say, the United States has a decidedly different view of the reasons why progress has been blocked in Geneva. We fail to see how it makes sense to block progress on an issue of such importance, where consensus exists, by linking it to another item where it is well known that consensus has not been established. The United States has sought to demonstrate flexibility in developing a consensus on the programme of work for the Conference on Disarmament; it looks to others to be similarly flexible.

Thirdly, Ambassador Shen characterized United States work on a programme for developing a limited national missile defence as a unilateral nuclear arms expansion in another form. We would strongly disagree with such a characterization of a non-nuclear programme designed to counter certain limited threats. These threats could themselves be nuclear and be the result of proliferation in a world quite different from that in 1972 when the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty was concluded. As Secretary of State Albright made clear at the NPT Review Conference,

> "if the Clinton Administration were bent on sabotaging the ABM Treaty and strategic arms control, we have surely gone about it in a strange way — in the open, with care, and in consultation not only with Congress, but after extensive discussions with our allies and other countries, Russia and China emphatically included".

With respect to the agenda item, "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms", previous speakers, including the representatives of the European Union and of Argentina, have given useful accounts of the

remarkable developments over the past 15 years or so, with the Stockholm Conference of 1986 as the benchmark. Speakers have also pointed to the importance of focusing on regional developments and of taking into account regional differences.

The United States delegation agrees that a great deal of progress has been achieved since Stockholm. There is no doubt that regions have proceeded at different paces, and this is understandable. We should review the progress that has been achieved and, in seeking to apply this progress, keep regional variations carefully in mind. As the title for this item makes clear, the focus of our deliberations should be on practical measures.

We believe that the Working Group should study ways to encourage confidence-building measures that contribute to regional and international peace and security. In studying current confidence-building measures — or, somewhat more broadly, confidence- and security-building measures — with respect to conventional arms, the Commission could usefully catalogue what has already been or is being pursued in various forums, including those in a regional context.

Our delegation looks forward to pursuing our work over the coming days.

Mr. Mohammad Kamal (Malaysia): I join other delegations in congratulating the Chairman on his election, confident in the knowledge that he will be able to guide our work to a fruitful conclusion. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election. I take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the untiring efforts and contribution of the Chairman's predecessor, Mr. Maged Abdelaziz of Egypt.

The ultimate goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, through their systematic and progressive reduction, remains one of the priority tasks of the international community. What we have been witnessing are promises made by the nuclear-weapon States to move towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, juxtaposed against the reality of national and regional security needs based on the continued possession of nuclear weapons and their qualitative improvements. We are justified in asking the question: Wherein lies the commitment needed in order to move towards the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world through the total elimination of nuclear weapons? The outlook for nuclear disarmament for the foreseeable future therefore remains bleak. The established nuclear-weapon States still cling in blind faith to their doctrine of nuclear deterrence, in the belief that nuclear weapons remain essential for their national security, thereby encouraging others to aspire to similar status for the same reason, which, however, is frowned upon.

At the Conference on Disarmament the start of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material, which in the autumn of 1998 had seemed possible, is yet to materialize. The Conference on Disarmament also failed, yet again, to agree on a programme of work.

A further setback is the ongoing controversy over the issue of the development of national and theatre missile defence systems, which, if pursued, will only destabilize the nuclear equilibrium and raise questions about the viability of current disarmament instruments and mechanisms.

Clearly, these developments do not augur well for the future of disarmament. Despite assurances by States with nuclear capabilities of their commitment towards disarmament, their actions, regrettably, have not matched their words. Are these not manifestations of the world sliding, inadvertently or otherwise, down the path of nuclear proliferation? Unless concerted actions are taken, and taken soon, to reverse this dangerous trend, existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes could very well become hollow instruments.

The cavalier attitude of the nuclear-weapon States towards nuclear disarmament is likely to undermine existing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regimes. It makes a mockery of non-nuclear States signing and ratifying treaties and protocols to restrict and control nuclear capabilities which they do not even possess to begin with. Over time, they will begin to question the usefulness of those treaties and conventions, and of their own participation in them.

In contemplating ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, it is worthwhile recalling the historic advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In one of the most significant and important milestones in the development of international law, the Court found that the use of nuclear weapons seems scarcely reconcilable with the provisions of humanitarian law protecting civilians and combatants from unnecessary and indiscriminate effects of warfare, and further found that nuclear-

weapon States had demonstrated no justifying circumstances of self-defence, in which the survival of a State would be at stake. Without being asked to do so, the Court also gave its opinion on the meaning of article VI of the NPT, which calls for good-faith negotiations towards nuclear disarmament. It stated in paragraph 2F of the disposition, which was endorsed by every judge:

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

We should take to heart the pertinent words of the President of the World Court, Judge Mohammad Bedjaoui of Algeria, who asked us to address the issue of nuclear weapons and to endeavour to correct the imperfections of an international law which is ultimately no more than the creation of the States themselves.

On the positive side, a number of developments ought to be applauded. The Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a major disarmament achievement that must be recognized. While it still awaits the required number of ratifications before its entry into force, we should welcome its ratification by the Russian Duma in April this year as a positive contribution towards that goal. Against the Russian decision, the earlier decision by the United States Senate not to ratify the CTBT was a disappointing let-down, especially when the international community had looked to the United States for leadership on this important matter. It is to be hoped that the United States Senate will put matters right by ratifying the Treaty at the next opportune moment. In this regard, we take note of the statement just delivered by the United States representative that

> "the United States is continuing to work for our eventual ratification of this key step in the process of nuclear disarmament".

My delegation is also gratified by the positive developments in respect of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially with the establishment of such zones in Africa and South-East Asia, which, together with those in the South Pacific and South America, would form contiguous nuclear-weapon-free zones spanning the southern hemisphere. Progress in the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is gratifying indeed and reflects positively on the continuing commitment of the non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty. So far more than a hundred non-nuclear-weapon States in four continents are covered under the nuclear-weapon-free-zone umbrella. There has also been encouraging progress in the creation of a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty and in the acceptance of the innovative concept of a single-State weapon-free zone, initiated by Mongolia. Similarly, the equally innovative proposal by Belarus for a nuclear-weapon-free corridor merits serious consideration as part of a global concerted effort towards nuclear disarmament. We look forward to the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions, including the Middle East and South Asia.

My delegation accepts that many States depend on arms imports to ensure a reasonable level of security, and the inherent right of self-defence is recognized in the United Nations Charter. Unfortunately, arms purchases for legitimate national defence very often trigger an arms race, especially in regions in which there are underlying tensions in relations between the regional States. Hence, there is an imperative need for concrete confidence-building measures between these States so as to resolve, or at least manage, these underlying tensions. We believe progress in this area is possible on the basis of increased transparency and consultation between neighbours.

The Secretary-General stated in his last report on the work of the Organization (A/54/1) that during the 1990s we have witnessed major changes in the patterns of global conflict and in the international community's responses to them. Today, more than 90 per cent of armed conflicts take place within, rather than between, States. In his report to the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000), he indicated that the death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems — and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of the carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as weapons of mass destruction. Yet there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit their spread, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

The world community has clearly decided that it will no longer turn a blind eye to the costs that small arms and light weapons are imposing on human security and sustainable development. In his 1998 report (A/53/1), the Secretary-General noted that 90

per cent of those killed or wounded in conflicts involving light military weapons are civilians, and that 80 per cent of them are women and children. In his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871), the Secretary-General concluded that improvements in transparency, particularly with respect to the activities of international arms merchants, would do more to combat the flow of illicit arms into Africa than any other single initiative.

The principle of transparency should be extended to international transfers of conventional weapons and associated military technology. As a step in this direction, Malaysia continues to support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which provides for a confidence-building and transparency measure for States. The Register's existence will continue to alert the international community to attempts by any State to build up holdings of conventional weapons beyond a reasonable level. Information should be provided by all States on a regular basis after transfers have taken place. My delegation also urges greater openness on overall holdings of conventional weapons. We believe the provision of such data, and a procedure for seeking clarification, would be a valuable confidence- and security-building measure.

The principle of consultation should now be strengthened through the opening of discussions on this subject in this forum, as should the rapid implementation of recent initiatives among leading arms exporters, with the aim of agreeing on a common approach to the guidelines applied in the transfer of conventional weapons. As I mentioned earlier, there is still no global non-proliferation regime to limit the spread of these weapons, as there is for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Each of us should continue to play a constructive part in this important process in this and other appropriate forums.

If we are serious about conventional disarmament, each of us should play our part to prevent the building up of disproportionate arsenals. To that end, all countries should refrain from arms transfers which would be destabilizing or would exacerbate existing tensions. Special restraint should be exercised in the transfer of advanced technology weapons and in sales to countries and areas of particular concern. A special effort should be made to define sensitive items and production capacity for advanced weapons, to the transfer of which similar restraints could be applied. All States should take steps to ensure that these criteria are strictly enforced. We intend to give these issues our continuing close attention.

Advocacy of these practical disarmament measures need not interfere with or compromise the inherent right of self-defence, nor need such measures detract attention from nuclear disarmament. To the contrary, such measures promote both world peace and development. They constitute an issue with auspicious prospects for North-South cooperation. It is highly appropriate, therefore, that the Disarmament Commission will now seek to develop a consensus around further initiatives that may be taken in the growing field of the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

There is no dearth of ideas on how to propel the disarmament process forward. The problem that we face is not a lack of ideas. It is the lack of political will to move the process forward. If we wish to ensure the success of this Commission, all Member States, particularly the nuclear-weapon and arms-producing States, must manifest this political will. We believe it is within their power, singly or collectively as a group, to create the conditions — not overnight, but in the foreseeable future — for the attainment of the goals with regard to complete nuclear disarmament and dealing with the proliferation of conventional arms. With the desired political will and a creative approach, the end goal is attainable. In this regard, we commend the Secretary-General for highlighting disarmament issues in his recent Millennium report.

There are other equally important issues which I have not highlighted here, for the sake of brevity. We will do so at a later stage in the course of the Commission's deliberations.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I am especially pleased to see Mr. Zarif presiding over the work of the Disarmament Commission and I would therefore like to take this opportunity to extend to him my most sincere congratulations and best wishes for success in his difficult task. I also seize this occasion to congratulate all the members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups and to assure them of my delegation's full support.

It is also my pleasant duty to convey our gratitude to Mr. Zarif's predecessor, the representative of Egypt,

our friend Maged Abdelaziz, for his excellent work as Chairman of the Commission at the previous session.

Finally, I congratulate Mr. Dhanapala for his consistent support of the Commission and, moreover, of other disarmament bodies and for his important contribution yesterday at the opening of our deliberations.

This substantive session of our Commission, the first of the millennium, is being held in the wake of the satisfying results obtained at the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which all States parties showed that it is possible to achieve something when there is political will to do so. We cannot ignore the fact, however, that many developments of recent years are real causes for concern. These include the nuclear testing in South Asia, the lack of progress in drafting an agenda for the Conference on Disarmament and the rejection by the American Senate of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. These are all indicators of the long and difficult road to be travelled and the efforts to be made if mankind is to be rid of the nuclear threat.

That is why my delegation remains determined to work with other delegations and to make its contribution to a Commission that has become an important disarmament body. It remains the unique body in which all Member States have the opportunity to discuss and consider guidelines for the crucial problems of security and disarmament. We must therefore exploit the great potential of this body, the proof of which it has provided by achieving agreement, as it did in its sessions of 1996 and 1999, on such difficult questions as international arms transfers; the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned; and conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N.

Algeria believes that the two items on our agenda are of major importance. The first deals with ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament. Algeria is convinced that nuclear disarmament must remain an absolute priority and therefore continue to be accorded the special, sustained and specific attention of the international community, the United Nations and its organs entrusted with considering disarmament questions at this very critical time so that concrete measures can be adopted for dismantling all nuclear weapons.

In this respect, the nuclear disarmament process should therefore be firmly pursued at all levels: unilateral, bilateral and multilateral. While substantial reductions of nuclear arsenals are being agreed upon, and pending their total elimination, measures must be considered to prohibit, in all circumstances, the use or threat of use of these apocalyptic weapons against any non-nuclear-weapon State, as recalled by the International Court of Justice in its historic opinion of 8 July 1996.

The theory according to which nuclear disarmament falls within the exclusive purview of bilateral negotiations between nuclear-weapon States is neither acceptable nor defensible in either political or moral terms. Even if it were possible to obtain substantial results at the bilateral level in the reduction of weapons within the framework of the START agreements, it is indisputable that, in this era of globalization, security can be envisaged only in terms of collective security. It is pleasing to note, moreover, that the five nuclear-weapon States, at the sixth NPT Review Conference, committed themselves for the first time to eliminating totally their nuclear weapons.

On 30 July 1999, Algeria, motivated by that conviction, made a dual proposal for the establishment of ad hoc committees on disarmament and on the prohibition of the production of fissile material. We would express the wish that the efforts currently being made by the Belgian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva will further promote serious negotiations aimed at prohibiting the production of fissile material and will help to launch discussions on other aspects linked to nuclear disarmament, such as the question of negative security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States. In that regard, the Secretary-General's proposal on organizing a major international conference to eliminate nuclear threats is important and enjoys my country's support.

Algeria believes that the dynamics of disarmament will remain incomplete and unfinished so long as they do not encompass the question of conventional weapons, which has become particularly important to a growing number of States. These weapons feed and exacerbate — above all through illicit arms transfers — new, violent and often

transboundary phenomena, such as terrorism and drug-trafficking. This question is neither minor nor of secondary importance to the national security and stability of many countries. Through its various disarmament forums, the international community must take up and examine its many implications with due urgency and earnest. That is why Algeria supported the convening of a United Nations conference to consider the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We will participate actively in the preparations for that conference.

The change in international relations has resulted in the release of an enormous surplus of military *matériel* and equipment. On 24 April 1998, when the Security Council was considering the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict in Africa, Algeria — which, within its geographical area, is the country that devotes the lowest portion of its gross domestic product to national defence — stressed its interest in his recommendation to lower weapons and munition spending to 1.5 per cent, even though that recommendation required further clarification and honing.

In that same statement to the Security Council, Algeria welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General on the compilation, research and publication of information on arms trafficking, which feeds major international crime and terrorism. We felt that, to be effective, this proposal, which could be taken up by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, must nevertheless fall within the context of effective and disciplined cooperation from the international community aimed at dismantling and neutralizing networks of logistical support and distribution of weapons that help terrorist groups in their efforts to destabilize, destroy and kill.

Thus, my country could only support the inclusion on our agenda of the second substantive item on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. It goes without saying that confidence-building measures in this and other fields will have meaning and be implemented only when they are established voluntarily at the bilateral, subregional and regional levels.

Furthermore, these confidence-building measures must take into account the specific features of regions, and the conclusive experience acquired by several regions of the world, if it is to be useful to us in our thinking, cannot be imposed as a single model. Moreover, they cannot call into question the legitimate needs of States with respect to security and national defence. My delegation will make its contribution to and formulated proposals for the Working Group at the proper time.

The issues of disarmament and international security are inseparable from economic and social development, which is ultimately understood to be the foundation of peace and harmony between nations. At a time when threats are more global, but not necessarily military, and when underdevelopment and poverty are the root cause of many conflicts, it is legitimate that we, the developing countries, should expect far more than promises that are never kept. The most important confidence-building measure that our peoples expect is the support of the developed States for our efforts to eradicate poverty through the removal or easing of the debt burden that is jeopardizing the efforts of many developing countries. What value can we assign to confidence-building and disarmament measures — such as moratoriums, the destruction of surpluses or participation in arms registers — if they are not complemented by economic incentives for sustainable development? In that respect, the colossal sums generated by a reduction of weapons might, given the political will, be used to finance many development projects, improve the economic conditions of many countries and thereby ultimately contribute to creating collective security that could, potentially, launch a qualitatively new era for mankind.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.